

FRAZER'S HILL – MALAYA – 1956.

In Malaya I met my ultimate thrill,
While strolling one day on Frazer's Hill.
I left, below, the dust and heat,
That tired the weary travellers feet,
And walking with far lighter tread,
Trode the jungle trails instead.
On misty roads, beneath dripping trees,
With camera at my side, at ease.

"Don't stray too far from camp," they said,
"For all the terrorists here aren't dead,
And on the lonely jungle trail,
A cry for help is no avail."
But being young, and with no fear,
I left the road and blue skies clear,
To wander deserted, lonely track,
No thought of danger at my back.

I stepped from cool and misty shade,
Into sunlit roadside glade,
Then stopped. With wildly beating heart.
A panther, black, gave me a start.
It came from the jungle, just ahead,
With ghostly, silent, graceful tread.
With gentle nonchalance that day,
It paused on the road and looked my way.

As, casually, it turned away,
To view the road the other way,
I stood as quiet as could be,
It turned once more to gaze at me.
With liquid amber, glowing eyes,
It showed no fear, nor yet surprise,
Then, with a shake of magnificent tail,
Continued its walk down jungle trail.

Quiet and thoughtful, I made my way,
Back to the camp on that magic day.
Had the panther taken an interest in me?
Considered how I'd taste? For lunch or tea.
I should have been more alert, I know,
And taken a photograph to show
The sceptics, when I told my tale,
Of that chance encounter on jungle trail.

But apparently panthers were common there,
Though since then they have become quite rare.
I wonder if the one I met that day,
Along the cool and leafy way,
Survived the poacher's cruel gun,
Or the hunter's twisted form of fun.
For those beautiful creatures, graceful and rare,
Have the right to live in the jungle there.